

THE CLAIMS

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of the claims in the application. No new amendments to the claims are proposed in this paper.

1 -5. (cancelled)

6. (original) A method for evaluation of target structural features on a substrate, said method comprising:

(a) providing a calibration database comprising:

(i) information elements selected from the group consisting of (A) information elements describing a functional performance characteristic of respective reference structural features on a substrate, and (B) information elements describing a physical characteristic of each of said respective reference structural features, or both types of information elements, and

(ii) information elements describing feedback from said respective reference structural features as a function of position over each of said respective reference structural features,

(b) providing at least one weighting function as a function of position over each of said respective reference structural features and at least one correlation function as a function of position over each of said respective reference structural features, wherein a plurality of

weighting functions and/or correlation functions is provided,

- (c) determining a combination of weighting function and correlation function from said provided which provide a desired degree of correlation between said information elements (i) and (ii) for respective reference structural features,
 - (d) providing information elements describing feedback from said target structural features as a function of position over each of said respective target structural features on said substrate, and
 - (e) applying said combination of weighting function and correlation function to said target structural feature information elements to predict said functional performance characteristic of respective target structural features and/or to describe said physical characteristic of respective target structural features.
7. (original) The method of claim 6 wherein a plurality of weighting functions and a plurality of correlation functions are provided in step (b).
8. (original) The method of claim 6 wherein said weighting functions are selected from the group consisting of continuous functions and discontinuous functions.
9. (original) The method of claim 6 wherein a value of said weighting function of said determined combination of step (c) is multiplied with a value of a respective information element in step (e).
10. (original) The method of claim 6 wherein said calibration database includes

information elements describing a functional performance characteristic of respective reference structural features on a substrate, and said functional performance characteristic is predicted in step (e).

11. (original) The method of claim 10 wherein said functional performance characteristic is the etchability across said target feature.
12. (original) The method of claim 6 wherein said structural features are holes in a resist layer on said substrate.
13. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein said functional performance characteristic is a response of each respective hole to an etching protocol.
14. (original) The method of claim 6 wherein all of said information elements are embodied in a computer-readable medium and steps (c) and (e) are performed using a computer.
15. (original) The method of claim 6 wherein said feedback of steps (a) and (e) comprises secondary electron emission from said structural features upon exposure to a scanning electron beam.
16. (original) The method of claim 6 wherein steps (c) and (e) include performance of linear regression analysis.
17. (original) A method for evaluation of target structural features on a substrate, said method comprising:
 - (a) providing information elements describing feedback from said target structural features as a function of position over each of said respective target structural features on said substrate,

- (b) applying a combination of a weighting function and a correlation function to said target structural feature information elements to predict a functional performance characteristic of respective target structural features and/or to describe a physical characteristic of respective target structural features.
18. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein a value of said weighting function is multiplied with a value of a respective information element in step (b).
19. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein a functional performance characteristic is predicted in step (b).
20. (original) The method of claim 19 wherein said functional performance characteristic is the etchability across said target feature.
21. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein said structural features are holes in a resist layer on said substrate.
22. (original) The method of claim 21 wherein said functional performance characteristic is a response of each respective hole to an etching protocol.
23. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein all of said information elements are embodied in computer-readable media and steps (c) and (e) are performed using a computer.
24. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein said feedback comprises secondary electron emissions from said structural features upon exposure to a scanning electron beam.

25. (original) A system for evaluation of target structural features on a substrate, said system comprising:

- (a) a calibration database in a computer-readable medium, said database comprising:
 - (i) information elements selected from the group consisting of information elements describing a functional performance characteristic of respective reference structural features on a substrate and information elements describing physical analysis of each of said respective reference structural features, and
 - (ii) information elements describing feedback from said respective structural features as a function of position over each of said respective reference structural features,
- (b) information elements in a computer-readable medium corresponding to at least one weighting function as a function of position over each of said respective reference structural features, and at least one correlation function as a function of position over each of said respective reference structural features, wherein a plurality of weighting functions and/or correlation functions is provided,
- (c) means for determining a combination of weighting function and correlation function from said provided which provide a desired degree of correlation between said information elements (i) and (ii) for respective reference structural features,

- (d) information elements in a computer-readable medium describing feedback from said target structural features as a function of position over each of said respective target structural features on said substrate,
- (e) means for applying said combination of weighting function and correlation function to said target structural feature information elements to predict said functional performance characteristic of respective target structural features and/or to describe said physical characteristic of respective target structural features.

26. (original) The system of claim 25 wherein said means (c) comprises executable code stored in a computer readable medium and a computer capable of executing said code.

27. (original) The system of claim 25 wherein said means (e) comprises executable code stored in a computer readable medium and a computer capable of executing said code.

28. (original) An apparatus for evaluation of target structural features on a substrate, said apparatus comprising:

- (a) information elements in a computer-readable medium describing feedback from said target structural features as a function of position over each of said respective target structural features on said substrate,
- (b) means for applying a combination of weighting function and

correlation function to said target structural feature information elements to predict a functional performance characteristic of respective target structural features and/or to describe a physical characteristic of respective target structural features.

29. (original) The apparatus of claim 28 further comprising means for obtaining said information elements.

30. (original) The apparatus of claim 29 wherein said means for obtaining said information elements includes a scanning electron beam.

31. (original) A computer program stored in a computer-readable medium, said program performing a method of evaluating target structural features on a substrate, said method comprising:

- (a) creating a calibration database comprising:
 - (i) information elements selected from the group consisting of (A) information elements describing a functional performance characteristic of respective reference structural features on a substrate, and (B) information elements describing a physical characteristic of each of said respective reference structural features, or both types of information elements, and
 - (ii) information elements describing feedback from said respective reference structural features as a function of position over each of said respective reference structural features,

- (b) providing at least one weighting function as a function of position over each of said respective reference structural features and at least one correlation function as a function of position over each of said respective reference structural features, wherein a plurality of weighting functions and/or correlation functions is provided,
- (c) determining a combination of weighting function and correlation function from said provided which provide a desired degree of correlation between said information elements (i) and (ii) for respective reference structural features,
- (d) obtaining information elements describing feedback from said target structural features as a function of position over each of said respective target structural features on said substrate, and
- (e) applying said combination of weighting function and correlation function to said target structural feature information elements to predict said functional performance characteristic of respective target structural features and/or to describe said physical characteristic of respective target structural features.

32. (original) A computer program stored in a computer-readable medium, said program performing a method of evaluating target structural features on a substrate, said method comprising:

- (a) obtaining information elements describing feedback from said target structural features as a function of position over each of said respective target structural features on said substrate,

- (b) applying a combination of a weighting function and a correlation function to said target structural feature information elements to predict a functional performance characteristic of respective target structural features and/or to describe a physical characteristic of respective target structural features.

33. (previously presented) The method of claim 6 wherein said physical characteristic is a depth profile across said structural feature and said functional performance characteristic is etchability across said structural feature.

34. (previously presented) The system of claim 25 wherein said physical characteristic is a depth profile across said structural feature and said functional performance characteristic is etchability across said structural feature.

35. (previously presented) The computer program of claim 31 wherein said physical characteristic is a depth profile across said structural feature and said functional performance characteristic is etchability across said structural feature.